

ROMNEY ANNOUNCES INCREASE IN FUEL ASSISTANCE BENEFITS
Funds to help low-income families with home heating costs

Governor Mitt Romney today announced that Massachusetts has received an additional \$10.35 million to help low-income households with their home heating costs this winter as President Bush released \$191.5 million nationwide to the federal Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), more commonly known as the “fuel assistance program.”

“An increasing number of low-income residents across the Commonwealth need help in covering the rising costs of heating their homes,” said Governor Romney. “These funds will provide struggling Massachusetts households with assistance in paying their heating bills during our coldest winter months.”

\$6.5 million of Massachusetts’ allotment comes from LIHEAP contingency funds, which are being released due to the rising price of fuel and the cold temperatures many states faced in January. The remaining \$3.7 million results from an increase in the program’s fiscal year 2004 appropriation. The newly released emergency fuel assistance funds will be used to increase the benefit level of eligible low-income families.

Romney said that this additional relief means that many Massachusetts residents who participate in LIHEAP may now be eligible for as much as a \$100 increase to their regular benefits to help with their heating bills this winter.

Each year, LIHEAP assists more than 4.6 million low-income Americans in paying their heating bills. The program is administered in Massachusetts by the state Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and provides assistance to families with incomes up to 200 percent of the federal poverty level, or \$36,800 for a family of four. DHCD sets the benefit levels, and distributes the funds through a network of 22 regional non-profit and local government agencies.

The state has a toll-free HEATLINE at 1-800-632-8175, and information is available online at www.mass.gov/dhcd.

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